

REMARKS**I. Status of the Claims**

Claims 1-10 and 12-13 are all the claims currently pending.

By this Amendment, claim 11 have been canceled without prejudice or disclaimer and claims 1 and 12 have been amended. No new matter has been introduced by this Amendment.

II. Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. §102

Claims 1-11 and 13-14 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by Park (U.S. Patent No. 5,477,271, hereafter "Park"). Additionally, claim 12 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by Sekine et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,561,498, hereafter "Sekine"). The Applicants traverse the above rejections for the following reasons.

Park discloses an auto focusing method in which a signal of an area is multiplied by weight value and then after that is integrated. More specifically, a sampling area is divided into a center area and a peripheral area, and weight value "1" is allotted to the center area and weight value "0.5" is allotted to the peripheral area (as shown in Figs. 5A and 5B). By using this feature, auto focus operation is performed by highly weighting the center of a frame.

It is common, as in the present invention and the cited reference Park, for data of the center area to be highly weighted to adjust the focus in the center area. For example, in Figs. 5A and 5B of the cited reference Park, weight value of the peripheral area is changed from "0.5" to "0," as the Examiner pointed out. However, in the cited reference Park, the weight value changes in accordance with photographing scenes, it does not change within the peripheral area for one frame (scene). Further, it is disclosed in the cited reference Park that the weight value is

changed to “2” as shown in table 2. It is not described, however, when the weight value “2” is applied. Therefore, the cited reference Park does not disclose or suggest that “the level of weighting in the second area is changed so as to gradually approach to a weighting level of the first area through plural steps,” as in the present invention.

The cited reference Sekine is directed to an image stabilization. More specifically, in Sekine, an image stabilization device is capable of precisely detecting image blur by distinguishing a camera vibration and movement of a main photographing object. Therefore, in Sekine, an extracted motion vector is weighted. On the other hand in the present invention, a signal component of a focus detection area is weighted.

In Sekine, the weighting is performed in accordance with the main photographing object as shown Fig. 3(a) to Fig. 3(d), and the weighting is performed with respect to one focus detection area. Sekine does not disclose a weighting method in the case that a plurality of focus detection areas exist in a frame. Therefore, Sekine does not disclose that “the weighting device performs relative weighting processing between adjacent plural focus detection area,” as in the present invention.

The Applicants note that, in an embodiment of the present invention, the weighting value is changed by $\frac{1}{4}$ step with respect to each focus detection area in an image capturing apparatus having a plurality of focus detection area. This is described on lines 26 to 27, page 17 of the specification.

Accordingly, the Applicants believe that independent claims 1 and 12 as well as their dependent claims are patentable over Park and Sekine.

CONCLUSION

Based on the foregoing amendments and remarks, the Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection of claims and allowance of the application.

AUTHORIZATION

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any additional fees that may be required for consideration of this Amendment to Deposit Account No. 13-4500, Order No. 1232-5228.

In the event that an extension of time is required, or which may be required in addition to that requested in a petition for an extension of time, the Commissioner is requested to grant a petition for that extension of time which is required to make this response timely and is hereby authorized to charge any fee for such an extension of time or credit any overpayment for an extension of time to Deposit Account No. 13-4500, Order No. 1232-5228.

Respectfully submitted,
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